JOHN CROOK



John Crook was born October 11, 1831, in Trenton, Lancashire, England. He married Mary Giles, September 6, 1856. John died March 31, 1921, at the age of 89, one of the stalwart builders of the valley.

John Crook, together with Robert Holden, were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the spring of 1847. John was baptized by Uncle Peter

Mayho in the Brook of Hallith Wood. On January 1, 1851, he left Old England for America, arriving in Salt Lake City August 15, 1856. In his diary he relates many interesting incidents of the trip to America, the good times and the hard times. He was an ice peddler when he decided to come to Utah with the Giles family (William Giles). Mary, a member of the Giles family, later became his wife. They came to Utah in the E. B. Tripps company. He married Mary Giles September 6, 1856, in Provo City. In June, 1859, the west half of Heber was laid off in city lots, and in July he moved camp to that city and commenced hauling logs and building a house. When Wasatch Stake was organized, July 5, 1877, and Heber was divided into East and West Wards, John Crook was chosen first counselor to Bishop William Forman of the Heber West Ward. He was especially interested in music, genealogy and history, and was considered one of Wasatch County's best historians. He was the first choir leader in Heber. His vocation was farming and stock raising, and he was the owner of the first red sandstone quarries in this area.

Mary Giles Crook was born April 13, 1833, in Calvertson, Nottingshire, England, to William Giles and Sarah Huskinson. She died September 5, 1888.

Mary Giles Crook was married about a month after their arrival in Utah. She and John Crook were married by Bishop Jonathan O. Duke, Sr. Their first home was a covered wagon box, their next home was a two-room adobe house. The winters of '56 and '57 were very severe and the snow was very deep. Her husband, John, hauled willows from the river bottoms for firewood. Sometimes while working he would sink up to his armpits in the snow. In the fall of 1856, wheat was scarce and flour was $6 per hundredweight. She, like many other pioneer women, had to grind the wheat by hand in the little coffee mill. In November of '59 a baby girl came to the home of John and Mary Crook. They named her Sarah Elizabeth. This was the second child born in the valley. The home was built in the fort, thus protecting them from the Indians. After leaving the fort they built a three-room log house, later a red sandstone home, which is still standing and is occupied by a granddaughter, Mabel

Crook Lyon. The sandstone was from John's quarry, five miles east of town. At the time of the diphtheria epidemic she went into the homes and helped care for the sick and dying. She acted as a counselor in the Relief Society to President Katie Forman.

Children: John William, Mrs. John Carlile (Sarah Elizabeth), Heber Giles, George and Franklin (both died in infancy), Mrs. Jonathan O. Duke (Mary Jane), Thomas Huskinson, Frederick, and Mrs. Joseph Callister (Margaret Ann).







John Crook



JOHN CROOK.

John Crook is one of the hardy pioneers who helped to blaze the trails into this valley. He assisted in the early surveys of farm land and town lots and took part in most of the public improvements that have been started since. He took a prominent part in the Indian troubles, passed through the hard-times period when chopped wheat, smut and all, was at a premium, and braved all the other dangers and hardships incident to pioneer life in those early days.

Mr. Crook was born at Turton township, Lancashire, England, on October 11, 1831. When a small boy he attended school and worked in a factory, filling bobbins for tape weaving, alternately, spending half the day at school and the other half at the factory. This continued until he was about twelve years of age when he was given steady employment in the factory at from five to eight shillings a week. He kept this job until Christmas time in 1850, when he started for Utah with his father and two sisters. They landed at New Orleans March 14, 1851, and reached Council Bluffs about nine weeks later. He stopped there for five years, during which time his father died and his sisters married. He came on to the valleys in 1856, settling at Provo, where he married Mary Giles. Two years later he made his first trip to this valley in company with J. C. Snow, the surveyor, and others and assisted in surveying a plat of land about one and a half miles square west of Heber City. The next year, 1859, he moved his family up from Provo and established his home here.

John Crook has taken a lively interest in the establishment and maintenance of schools, amusements, Sunday schools and, in fact, all other social, and church organizations. He also kept a fairly good record of weather conditions, crop reports and other statistics for many years and is considered good authority on these points. He has been very successful as a farmer, gardener, and fruit grower and, with his sons, has opened up one of the best sandstone quarries in the state.

He has been volunteer correspondent for the Agricultural Bureau, D. C., for thirty-two years and fourteen years in the Weather Bureau service.



188 W 300 No John Crook home



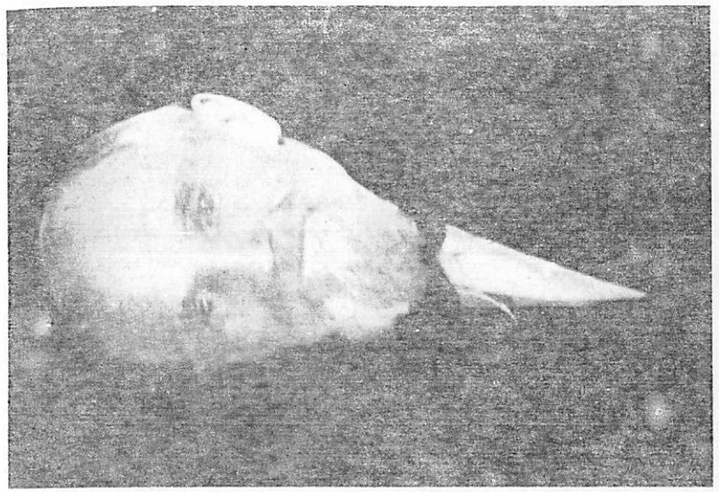
The cattle raisers made the first attempt at settlement. The lush grass meadows along the Provo River were the incentive for George Bean, William Meeks, Aaron Daniels, and William Wall. In the summer of 1858 they drove stock up the canyon and began preparations to stay permanently. Wall established his ranch in the neck of the canyon at the south end of the valley with Daniels and Meeks farther north.

The following winter prospective settlers held meetings in Provo to effect an organization for the projected valley settlement. They felt it necessary to take safety precautions against the Indians, but much of the early meetings were taken up with a discussion of the climate as it pertained to agriculture.[9] William Meeks was finally chosen to take charge of the affairs and regulations necessary to secure a safe settlement in the spring. Spring was eagerly awaited that year.

Among those most anxiously waiting was John Crook. John was born in Trenton, Lancashire, England, October 11, 1831. His father was a weaver and John went to work winding spools for him when nine years old. He and his sister Alice alternated going to school half a day and working in the factory. His father, devoutly religious, listened to the Mormon missionaries in Bolton, a small town nearby; and in September, 1840, he joined the L. D. S. Church. Seven years later John was baptized. In January, 1851, the family, including in-laws, boarded the good ship Ellen and after an eventful voyage, which included a collision with a schooner, arrived in New Orleans. From here a two dollar and fifty cent voyage up the Mississippi brought them to St. Louis. They arrived in Council Bluffs, Iowa, twenty days later and settled on Peter Holden's farm in 1851.

John stayed here in Council Bluffs five years working for various merchants. Finally he and his brother-in-

[9] *Wasatch Wave*, March 23, 1889.



William Lindsay



John Crook

law, Edmund Kay, went into the ice business. Delivering ice proved as profitable socially as financially for he met and fell in love with Mary Giles, who was working for one of his customers.

When Mr. Giles decided to go to Utah and take Mary with him, John determined it was time to travel west also. In September, 1856, he married Mary in Provo and the two set up housekeeping in the wagon John had used to cross the plains. Until the time came to start the new settlement in Provo Valley, the Crooks worked in conjunction with Thomas Rasband and the Giles family, learning how to farm the ten acre plot which had been purchased jointly. He joined the first company which left Utah Valley to settle the present town of Heber, and the journal which he later made has proved to be an outstanding source for the early history of the valley.

The organization for settling the valley failed to form a company soon enough for some of the more ardent enthusiasts. By the middle of April the excitement for new land prompted a small group to move out. Three wagons were fitted, and on April 29, 1859, the group of ten men began the trek to Provo Valley. The ten were John Jordan, John Crook, C. N. Carroll, William Giles, John and James Carlyle, Jesse Bond, Hyrum Chatwin, Thomas Rasband, and a brother Carpenter.[10]

The group that set out the last of April met their only challenge on the journey in the form of a snowslide crossing the road near the south fork of the Provo River. They camped here the first night, and early the next morning they took the wagons to pieces and packed the parts and provisions up the slide until good wheeling could be had once more. The night of April 30th they camped at William Wall's ranch in the neck of the valley. The next day they crossed the river to

[10]The Journal of John Crook, p. 36.

the east side of the main valley and continued northward to Daniel's ranch and creek. This creek was still frozen over, and the teams easily crossed it on the ice. A little further and the ranch and house of William Meeks was seen. This was the same man who had been placed in charge of the organizations for the valley settlement the previous winter. John Crook records that Mr. Carpenter had shot a sandhill crane and insisted upon cooking it for breakfast, "which caused much merriment in camp."

The search for a suitable camping place brought them in contact with three men plowing a strip on the plot laid off the previous summer. They were surprised to learn that the three—William Davidson, Robert Broadhead, and James Davis—had arrived two weeks earlier from Nephi in Juab County.

The next day the company moved their wagons to a spring which they had discovered on the east side of the valley and built a wickiup of poles, covered with willows, wheat grass, and dirt, large enough to hold thirty men. This shelter was shared with the parties which soon followed and became known as the London Wickiup because of its great size.[11] The spring was called London Spring as a result.

Plowing and planting were the order of the day and continued although it was necessary to don overcoats and gloves for the snow storm that came three days later and lasted two weeks. The last of May, William Meeks, Jesse Fuller, the deputy surveyor, and a group of men arrived at the camp and held a meeting concerning ownership of the plots surveyed the previous summer. Those assembled voted to resurvey the ground, and the next morning a stampede took place for the best land.[12]

Land hungry settlers came all summer, and by fall the square mile reserved for a city was laid out in blocks and lots. A fort, forty rods square, was surveyed on the

[11]John Crook, "History of Wasatch County," *op. cit.*
[12]*Ibid.*

townsite and families immediately moved onto it and commenced building. John W. Witt and his family were the first to finish a log cabin on the fort line. He had previously cut the logs for a dwelling on the bank of Lake Creek, and when the fort was surveyed he was able to put up a log cabin in two days. His building was soon followed by others. Many of the settlers who had built wickiups at London Spring moved them down to the fort so that by winter there were seventeen families established on the site. A few families had moved onto their city lots and commenced building substantial log houses also.

Snow began falling in September even before Jesse McCarroll could bring his threshing machine up from Provo to thresh the grain, and much of the wheat was shriveled by frost. November was filled with monotonous days of snowing, and in December the weather turned clear and intensely cold. Clear weather offered opportunity to haul firewood from the Big Grove at the center north field; and the squeaking, snow-covered wagon wheels could be heard a mile away.[13]

Some of the pioneers celebrated Christmas with a banquet prepared by Sarah Lee. John and Sarah Lee were among the later settlers to arrive in the valley that first year, and they had taken up residence in a log cabin two blocks southwest of the fort. Their cabin was not large enough to accommodate all the settlers, and so six families were invited to come and share a feast which included ground cherry pudding and squash pie.

During Christmas week a sleighing party of young folks arrived from Provo and treated the valley residents to a gay round of dancing and amusement until New Years Day. From then until March there were no visitors, no mail—only bitter cold weather.

The first Thursday in March the Mormon settlers

[13]*Ibid.*

held a fast meeting in Thomas Rasband's house to pray for an early spring. John Crook records the event as follows:

> All hands prayed fervently to the Lord to temper the elements and cause the snow to melt, that we might be able to put in crops in the season thereof. And by noon the eaves on the north side of the house were dripping water from the snow melting. By the middle of the month the snow was gone.[14]

Spring of 1860 brought additional settlers from Provo, and by fall of that year the fort line was filled with over forty families. That summer a twenty by forty foot double log cabin was built in the center of the fort to serve as a school and meeting house.

By the end of 1862 many families had settled on the townsite proper and Heber, named after Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young's popular first counselor, was a flourishing pioneer community.

[14]The Journal of John Crook, p. 39.



William Lindsay



John Crook